Climate crisis is being ignored by those in power, activist says; 'Nothing has happened' after year of protests, Thunberg tells summit

The Toronto Star

December 7, 2019 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A20

Length: 525 words

Byline: Aritz Parra And Frank Jordans The Associated Press

Dateline: MADRID

Body

Climate activist Greta Thunberg said Friday that calls for real action against climate change are still being "ignored" by political leaders, despite their continuous praise of the global environmental youth movement she helped create.

The Swedish teen was in Madrid, where United Nations-sponsored talks on climate change are underway, to join fellow young climate activists, representatives of Latin America's Indigenous peoples, and thousands of other protesters.

Before marching, Thunberg said at a press conference that she hoped the COP25 summit would lead to "something concrete" and "increasing awareness among people in general."

"We have been striking now for over a year, and still basically nothing has happened," she told reporters, surrounded by three activists from Spain and Uganda. "The climate crisis is still being ignored by those in power."

The 16-year-old was followed by a swarm of cameras and reporters from the very first step she took out of an overnight train from Lisbon.

The advocate of carbon-free transportation arrived in the Portuguese capital this week after sailing across the Atlantic Ocean from the United States by catamaran.

During the Dec. 2-13 talks, nearly 200 countries are meant to streamline the rules on global carbon markets and agree on how poor countries should be compensated for destruction largely caused by emissions from rich countries.

An official directly involved in the negotiations said that despite a few setbacks, the technical negotiations were progressing, although many issues were being left for ministerial-level meetings in the summit's second and final week.

The official, who asked to remain anonymous given the sensitivity of the discussions, added that a political declaration on greater "ambition" - a buzzword at the summit - was proving "difficult to achieve."

"A summit that doesn't end with enhanced ambition would be something that nobody would understand if we take into account what the streets and science are telling us," the official said.

The talks came as evidence mounts about disasters that could ensue from further global warming, including a study commissioned by 14 seafaring countries and published Friday predicting that unchecked climate change could devastate fishery industries and coral reef tourism.

Demands for greater action by non-governmental organizations and a whole new generation of environment-minded activists were expected to take the spotlight with the presence of Thunberg in Madrid. Past appearances have won her plaudits from some leaders - and criticism from others who've taken offence at the angry tone of her speeches.

Asked about the skepticism on global efforts to fight the warming temperatures expressed by some world leaders, she said: "Some people want everything to continue like now, they are afraid of the change that we, the youth, are bringing."

"They try so desperately to silence us," she added.

Next to her, Vanessa Nakate, a 22-year-old member of Uganda's chapter of Fridays for Future said that young activists don't want more promises.

"We are tired of the praises that you keep giving the activists," she said. "We want you to act."

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Document-Type: COLUMN

Publication-Type: NEWSPAPER

Subject: CLIMATE CHANGE (92%); CLIMATE ACTION (90%); NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS (90%); NEGATIVE MISC NEWS (90%); NEGATIVE NEWS (90%); PROTESTS & DEMONSTRATIONS (90%); CLIMATOLOGY (89%); ELECTIONS & POLITICS (89%); TALKS & MEETINGS (89%); TRANSPORTATION & ENVIRONMENT (79%); EMISSIONS (78%); GLOBAL WARMING (78%); NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (77%); PRESS CONFERENCES (74%); UNITED NATIONS (73%); ISLANDS & REEFS (72%); NATIVE AMERICANS (71%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (63%); INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (56%)

Industry: TRANSPORTATION & ENVIRONMENT (79%); EMISSIONS (78%); GLOBAL WARMING (78%)

Person: GRETA THUNBERG (79%)

Geographic: MADRID, SPAIN (93%); LISBON, PORTUGAL (79%); ATLANTIC OCEAN (76%); SPAIN (92%); LATIN AMERICA (79%); UGANDA (79%); UNITED STATES (79%); PORTUGAL (78%)

Load-Date: December 7, 2019

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